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To: Senator Beth Bye, Co-Chair, CGA Appropriations Committee
Representative Toni E. Walker, Co-Chair, CGA Appropriations Committee
Legislative Office Building
300 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, Connecticut 06106-1451

Re: Funding Restoration for the Kensington Hatchery in FY 2016-2017

Dear Senator Bye and Representative Walker,

I represent Trout Unlimited in Connecticut as Chairman of its CT Council overseeing the eight Chapters and our 4,000+ members. We strongly urge the Appropriations Committee to restore funding ($195,000) for the Kensington Hatchery in the Fiscal 2016 -2017 Biennial Budget, as it has consistently done in prior years.

TU is the nation's largest grassroots coldwater fisheries organization with a mission to conserve, protect and restore North America's trout and salmon fisheries and their watersheds. We work to achieve this mission on a local, state and national level through an extensive volunteer network and dedicated staff.

TU's 150,000 members are organized into more than 400 local chapters; they are anglers, community leaders, professionals, and business owners, and are among the most effective and articulate grassroots advocates for protecting our important watersheds and landscapes.

I ask that you consider three reasons to restore the modest funding needed to keep Kensington in operation:

A. TU's Trout-in-the-Classroom Program (TIC)
B. Dedicated staff at Kensington who are protecting a valuable ecological resource
C. Our State's economically significant recreational fishing community

A: The TIC Program

What better way is there to teach science than by getting students to do science, and enjoy it as well? TIC is a hands-on, multi-disciplinary environmental education program that teaches students to raise trout in their schools, from eggs to fingerlings, in the course of 8 months. Trout are sensitive indicator species studied by biologists and ecologists to determine the health of many of our drinking water streams, but their sensitivity to pollution and changes in water chemistry also make them difficult to raise in a tank. TIC students learn to carefully monitor water chemistry on a daily basis, testing the pH, ammonia, nitrite, and nitrate levels in the water. The students get hands-on understanding of the nitrogen cycle in a healthy ecosystem and how the entire riparian environment helps to shape the ecology of a stream. They also hone their

analytical skills using the data collected to extract knowledge and insight, a skill they can leverage as adults. When the date approaches for the trout to be released into local streams, the students then test the chemistry of those waters as well to confirm its suitability for their tiny charges. This further reinforces the students' evolution to be good stewards striving to keep our streams healthy for trout.

As the trout are released, the students often wonder how their fish will survive in the wild without someone there to give them fish pellets every day. This question provides a perfect transition into learning all about 'bugs', i.e., the macroinvertebrate species in streams that their trout will need to learn to now feed on.

The trout eggs from Kensington are integral to the TIC program's success in Connecticut. Without this egg source, the program will have to shrink, if not disappear altogether. This would impact approximately 10,000 students in Connecticut each year who oversee the 110 TIC tanks in 70 towns at 90 schools. For more than ten years that TIC has been in existence, we have seen that the program has been highly impactful, earning the earnest support of our educators with its multi-disciplinary curriculum and engaging the students in dramatic ways. Because TIC encompasses not only science, but also language arts, mathematics, social studies and art, this classroom program has turned around kids that were bored and not excited about coming to school. Now we are seeing these previously uninspired students becoming marine biologists, environmental lawyers and advocates, and ardent protectors of nature, as well as volunteer youth leaders in TU.

If you need further proof, check out New Jersey's TIC Program at http://www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw/tic.htm. Because it recognized early on the remarkable impact of TIC on New Jersey's students, the state's Department of Fisheries and Wildlife (DFW) now runs TIC as a supplementary educational activity through a partnership with the TU chapters in NJ. The DFW supplies brook trout eggs from their Pequest hatchery at no charge to teachers for their TIC tanks that are managed by 40,000 students each year.

B: Kensington's Seeforellen Brown Trout Strain

The second reason to keep Kensington operating relates to the sustained protection of a valuable and irreplaceable ecological resource. The Kensington Hatchery is unique because it is responsible for all of Connecticut's Seeforellen brown trout, a German strain of trout that grow very large and survives well in our waters where rainbow trout and the native brook trout don't do as well. Kensington also has the only disease-free stock of Seeforellens left in the US, which raises the question, "why even consider closing it?"

C: CT's Recreational Fishing Spend

Many of Connecticut's rivers, streams, lakes and ponds used to teem with aquatic life, before succumbing to four hundred plus years of economic development and industrialization that subsequently diminished the ability of these habitats to be self-sustaining. Today's fish stocking at least enables our citizens to have something to fish for. Since little natural reproduction occurs today, the waters would otherwise be devoid of trout.

This is why we need the tens of thousands of Kensington fish stocked each year to improve the recreational opportunities for our 150,000 anglers, which in turn adds significant economic value to CT (more than $1,000 is spent per year by the average angler). Cut out the fishing opportunities and you reduce the economic benefit to Connecticut's outfitters, retailers, lodging, restaurants, etc., and further degrade license sales, a significant source of funding that goes into the general fund.

A final economic consideration is that allowing the Kensington Hatchery to close is likely to push up the cost of fish stocking, since there is no surplus capacity in the other two state-run hatcheries. This constrained supply will open the door to price increases by commercial hatcheries, impacting those organizations that turn to them to stock their waters.

In closing, let me state that I find it very unfortunate that year after year we have had to appeal to the CT General Assembly to put funds back into the State budget to keep the uniquely valuable Kensington Hatchery in operation. I hope that HB 6047, recently put forth by Sen. Tong and Rep. Ziobron that seeks to permanently ensure proper funding for our state-run hatcheries, is passed this year. Our younger generations would likely agree.

Regards,

James P. Glowienka
Chairman, CT Council
Trout Unlimited